

**FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK: Meditation on the Gospel.** (Fr. Robert Kenfack)

Even though well known as “The Prodigal Son”, The Parable of today’s Gospel can be entitled, and very rightly so, “The Merciful Father”. Three characters are on the scene: The Father and his two sons. Each represents a way of life that calls our attention and invites to review our conduct.

The younger brother is the figure of human disordered desires for independence, profligacy, wantonness and even debauchery. His exodus is the bold step into self-satisfaction, self-sufficiency, self-pride, and self-righteousness. Unfortunately, his illusionary dreams could not last forever. Whatever ladder he had taken to climb, was not high ever to prevent him from crumbling woefully. He had to come down to earth. He had to become normal, that is, to face life reality for what it really is, away from the rantings that blinded him before. The credit that can be given to this young man is that is “he came to his senses”. This comeback is called “Contrition”, the very first and important step into every process of reconciliation. There will never be a genuine penance and conversion without true acknowledgement of the reality, as it is, without complacency, rather with honesty and objectivity. He made up his mind to go back. A homecoming that revealed the real image of the Father, the main character of the parable.

The Father is good, kind and merciful. He cannot be otherwise. Goodness is his name, his language, his actions. He cares about his children’s happiness and is ready for every sacrifice for their sake. He had been watching relentlessly, scrutinizing all corners, all bends, all moves, how little they may be, to have his son back. That the Divine attitude for mankind, especially those who go astray, sinners. He cares so little about explanations, justifications, any account of the past. He cares about the return, the comeback. He vests the son with his Dignity, the garment of salvation; he restores and gives life back. Furthermore, he organizes an improvised party to celebrate. That is the outcome of every confession, the happy celebration of the return into the human and divine state. Only God can make it possible. Human beings will not. They are as revengeful and stereotyped like the elder son.

He judges, condemns, and takes advantage of the departure of the brother. He has been working hard secure all remaining properties for himself. The return of the brother is an open injustice. He deserves nothing, mercilessly. He has to die. After all, it is his fault, his choice. Human justice knows no mercy, no forgiveness, and no pity. Sinners are shun with hatred and curse, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. Their sins are remembered and recounted like the best part of history never to be forgotten. They are labeled and prejudiced for life unending. Our Christian communities and modern society abound of such. Words and acts of condemnation fly from us like missiles, like nuclear bombs, like massive destruction weapons.

The Father of the parable appeals to us. In the heart of lent, we have to learn from him. Another opportunity is possible. We are challenged both to come back, and to lead others back. Oh that today you would listen to his voice, harden not your hearts.